

Written testimony of Max E. Ballardo of Hartford, Connecticut, before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee.

March 7, 2011

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and honorable members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Max Ballardo and I am with Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice.

I am here before you to strongly support SB 205, AN ACT REQUIRING THERMOSTAT MANUFACTURERS TO PAY INCENTIVES FOR THE RETURN OF MERCURY THERMOSTATS.

I am concerned about the dangers of mercury in our air, water and food supply. We still have products in the market that contain toxic chemicals that affect human health, the health of animals, and pollute our environment. I am happy to know mercury was banned from consumer products in 2002; nevertheless, it is sad to know there is no effective way to dispose of existing products containing mercury. As mentioned, I am here to support Senate Bill 205 because I think it is important we require from manufacturers to be responsible for products they introduced to our environment.

I believe that by manufactures paying incentives for returning mercury containing thermostats we will avoid them being thrown into garbage. If these thermostats were to go into regular trash we will not be able to stop incinerators from burning them and polluting our air.

We know that mercury is a highly toxic and persistent element. Unfortunately, mercury is still in many U.S. households hiding inside thermostats. I, myself have changed over 5 thermostats at home and a friend's house. When I opened these old thermostats I found mercury in small glass tubes. This container was very fragile and I knew I had to dispose carefully of it. Nevertheless, I had not the same luck when I changed one old thermostat in a friend's house in Manchester Connecticut. My friend's husband noticed I had put thermostat aside to be recycled in hazardous collection days, but he figured it was just trash and he threw it into garbage. Fortunately, my friend realized thermostat was missing and recovered it from trash. With this example I just want to comment how uninformed Connecticut residents are on this matter. We need to make sure laws are passed and public is informed why they are passed.

Thank you for your time and I hope your understanding why we need to make sure some manufacturers provide incentives for returning mercury containing thermostats.

Max E. Ballardo

Researcher for Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice